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Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session

Draft report

Chapter III
General debate

25. Statements during the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee on Information: Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Chile (on behalf of the Rio Group), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Jamaica (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Japan, Kazakhstan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mexico (on behalf of 20 Spanish-speaking countries), Mongolia, Mozambique (on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries), Nepal, Netherlands (on behalf of the Western European and other States Group), Nigeria, Pakistan, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, United States of America and Yemen.

26. The observers for Azerbaijan, Monaco, Tajikistan and the United Arab Emirates also made statements in the general debate. The Director of the New York Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also addressed the Committee, as did the observer for Palestine on behalf of the Arab Group.

27. In taking up the substantive questions before the Committee, all speakers noted that they attached great importance to the commemoration of World Press Freedom Day on 3 May and to the values that it represented. Many delegations reiterated that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all people have the right to freedom of opinion and expression. They condemned violence against journalists to silence or obstruct them, and paid tribute to those who have lost their lives or been injured in the line of duty. One delegation observed that freedom of the press is a fundamental tenet of democracy.

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28. All speakers pointed to the importance of information in the new millennium and the critical role that it could play in national empowerment and development. A number of delegations stated that there must be a new, more just and effective global information and communications order, based on a free and balanced flow of information to all people. One speaker referred to information as a major tool in the transmission of the truth and promoting the goals of peace and humanity. However, in his view, legal and ethical criteria are required for its dissemination. One speaker referred to the need for international information security.

29. Many delegations noted that the inherent potential of the global village has given way to the inequalities of the digital divide. They agreed that many developing countries currently do not have the infrastructure and resources to benefit from modern information technology. A number of speakers pointed to the Secretary-General's Millennium Report (A/54/2000), in which he offered a timely analysis of this divide, characterizing it as a very serious problem facing the world in the twenty-first century. They agreed with him that the United Nations must now fully tap the potential of the information revolution and help to bridge this gap between North and South by upgrading its information technology to better inform the world's people of the Organization's aims and achievements.

30. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, noted that the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000 recognized the potential of information and communication technologies for spurring economic growth and social development, as well as the possibility that their utilization could lead to further disparities between and within countries. Delegations agreed that there is a need to make maximum use of all avenues of cooperation for the development of information and communication capabilities in developing countries. Several speakers pointed to UNESCO work to supporting projects for promoting universal access to information. In this connection, several delegations noted that this is particularly critical for the African continent.

31. Committee members strongly endorsed the view of world leaders at the Millennium Summit, held in September 2000, that the challenge is now to ensure that globalization will become a positive force for the world's people. Since the Millennium Declaration has proclaimed the right of universal access to information and communication technologies, many delegations commended the Secretary-General for his leadership in building bridges over the digital divide, by establishing the United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS), the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force. One delegation noted that its country has already contributed to the UNITeS, and urged other Governments to do likewise.

32. All speakers strongly supported the Secretary-General's initiative in assigning a major role to communications and information activities in order to build broad-based global support for the Organization. They agreed with him that the goals of the United Nations cannot be attained without the efforts by the Department of Public Information to build an informed understanding by the world's public of the work and objectives of the United Nations. They reiterated that the Department must mobilize the public support generated by the Millennium Summit and communicate effectively to a global audience that the United Nations is truly the indispensable common house of the entire human family. Many delegations called on the

Department to disseminate balanced and objective information and to project an open and transparent Organization. In the words of one speaker, the Department provides the only information outlet that can give a holistic view of the United Nations in the face of sometimes negative press coverage on its work.

33. Several speakers referred to the working methods of the Committee on Information. One delegation, on behalf of a large group, noted that the structure of the resolution traditionally adopted is a good one, and looked forward to open and flexible exchange and negotiation with a view to achieving consensus. Other speakers also called for consensus in the deliberations of the Committee. One delegation noted that aspects of draft resolution A are today more important than ever before, and did not think that it could be replaced with a discussion on the digital divide, although this is a serious topic. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, said that in order to intensify the dialogue with the Department of Public Information meetings should be held between representatives of the regional groups and the Department, perhaps once every three months, to discuss implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

34. Committee members welcomed the new Interim Head of the Department of Public Information, and also commended the excellent leadership of his predecessor, Under-Secretary-General Kensaku Hogen. They generally praised the measures that have been taken to date in the reorientation process, noting in particular the Department's efforts to develop a culture of communications within the Organization and to develop a strategic vision within the Secretariat. One delegation, on behalf of a large group, welcomed the Department's initiatives to undertake organizational shifts and obtain quality feedback from audiences. Several noted that a clear definition of priorities and the intelligent allocation of resources are now critical for the Department to enable it to use the appropriate mix of communications tools. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, noted that the Committee will need to formulate policies to strengthen the Department's effectiveness for it to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, and that the Department must realize the slogan "Global vision, local voice" by reaching out to key redisseminators, namely the media and non-governmental organizations. Another delegation noted that in view of the limited resources available to the Department, efforts must be made to rationalize its activities, adopt new technologies, and cooperate with and mobilize the private sector. One speaker noted that it is imperative for the Committee to give the Department clear mandates, while at the same time backing them up with the necessary resources. He further emphasized that the attrition of posts in the Department must be halted. One speaker insisted that no decision that affected the future of the Department should be taken unless it is first debated in the Committee, in order not to sideline the Committee.

35. All speakers pointed to the enormous outreach possibilities opened up by the communications revolution, and strongly supported the Department's embrace of new technology in all aspects of its work. They unanimously commended the Department for developing and maintaining the United Nations web site, which they agreed is a major communications tool for amplifying the Organization's message and providing information to hundreds of millions of people around the world. One speaker noted that the web site team is a textbook example of what can be accomplished by using existing resources, and questioned the need for an outside contractor to rationalize the site. On the subject of user friendliness, several speakers noted that the redesigned web site is sometimes difficult to navigate. On

the other hand, one delegation characterized the web site as user-friendly, comprehensive and rich in content. One speaker commended the Department for increasing the content and links devoted to United Nations relations with civil society and the business sector. A number of speakers were pleased to note that the Department has given its support to launching a United Nations Radio web page in Portuguese, which will soon be available. One delegation commended the Department for the development of the Committee on Information site, and others welcomed the "The United Nations works" page. Several speakers called for the optical disk system to be linked as soon as possible to the United Nations web site, thereby enhancing the multilingual character of the site and making information freely available to all. One speaker, on behalf of a group, noted that United Nations web sites have income-generation potential in some instances. Several speakers agreed that the Department should take the lead in establishing one central Internet portal to encompass all web sites in the United Nations system.

36. The issue of multilingualism in all of the work of the Organization, especially in its information activities, was a major topic of debate for many delegations. They expressed particular concern with regard to the lack of parity on the web site among the six official languages of the Organization. It was pointed out by a number of speakers that this situation would worsen the digital divide. Several noted that while there has been some improvement on multilingualism, more remains to be done. One speaker noted that the format of the main pages on the web site is identical in all languages, even though the volume of information is not equal. Another delegation noted that the web pages in Chinese are only 10 to15 per cent of those in English and French. One speaker noted that in regard to proposals to enrich language sites, actual usage of sites must not be the only criterion. A technical survey is required, he noted, to establish requirements for obtaining parity.

37. One delegation, speaking also for a group of 20 Spanish-speaking countries, strongly criticized the increasing imbalance in the Organization with regard to the use of official and working languages. More specifically, she noted that the Spanish-speaking countries cannot accept this situation. She put forward a detailed plan, which she asked to be transmitted to the Secretary-General, calling for a number of steps to help achieve language parity in the Organization's work. Another speaker, on behalf of a large group, called for real, not rhetorical commitment to achieving multilingualism in the Organization, and, he too, asked that resources be committed to the use of the Spanish language, commensurate with the number of Spanish speakers in the world. A number of delegations noted that the Arabic language should be more widely used in information materials generally, with one stating that the necessary resources must be allocated to make this possible.

38. While strongly agreeing that technological innovation and electronic media are critical to the dissemination of United Nations information, a large number of speakers in the Committee emphasized the critical importance of traditional means of dissemination. Some suggested that they have become more important than ever before to countries and people on the other side of the digital divide. Delegations agreed that radio continues to be the most widely used medium available in developing countries, and, in the words of one speaker, its capacity to serve the needs of developing countries should be optimized. Many noted that its importance for the people of Africa cannot be overemphasized. Committee members widely praised the pilot project for the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations, which provides 15-minute radio news bulletins in

the six official languages, that are being broadcast by hundreds of radio stations. They agreed that these daily transmissions help the Department to ensure the dissemination of full and objective United Nations information on a global scale. Many delegations agreed that the project must be extended beyond the pilot stage and placed on a stable footing, with adequate funding. Another delegation, concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that the pilot project has been one of the more dramatic and successful examples of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information, noted that it should become a cornerstone of information activities, and he looked forward to the final report on the results of the project.

39. A number of speakers, including one on behalf of a group, stressed the importance that they attach to the Department's Portuguese-language activities and pointed to the success of these efforts. As a consequence, they reiterated their strong support for strengthening the capacities of the Portuguese language programming of United Nations Radio, and commended the tireless efforts of the staff member involved. One delegation emphasized the importance of radio for the Russian-speaking audience. Another speaker pointed to the fact that the radio programming in Bahasa Indonesian constituted one of the most effective methods of communicating information to more than 200 million people in the region. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a group, again called on the Department to introduce radio programming in Creole for the Haitian public.

40. With regard to television, one speaker on behalf of a large group said that it commended the Department for the continued airing of programmes about the Organization on channel 78 of a Manhattan cable network, and wished to explore how such programmes could be given worldwide coverage. Another asked about the availability of the products of United Nations Television in Arabic.

41. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, noted that the ability of the United Nations to communicate its message and relevance to audiences depends on how it projects its operations to the media. It was heartened that the information flow from the United Nations to journalists is beginning to increase substantially, and that technological advances have been made in this regard. A number of speakers mentioned the success and usefulness of the United Nations News Centre, now hosted on the web site, which one delegation said is proving to be a key element for the work of journalists everywhere and NewsAlert, the service which is expected to be launched before the next session of the General Assembly. One speaker, in referring to the Department's press releases, said that they should bring out the intergovernmental aspect of the Organization's work and deliberations. Another questioned the need for the production after meetings of "near-verbatim" press releases, which do not appear geared to satisfying the needs of the press or the public. A third speaker called for the issuance of press releases in all six languages, as supported by the General Assembly, and another referred to the importance of posting the releases on the United Nations web site in a timely manner.

42. One Committee member commended the quality of the flagship magazine, the *UN Chronicle*, and mentioned the Indian edition of this magazine, which is being issued at no cost to the Organization, an approach that could be explored for other regions. In his view, this publication's periodicity and multilingualism require further examination.

43. One delegation denounced the aggression against it in the form of radio and television broadcasts from another country as flagrant violations of international

law. Exercising its right of reply, another delegation noted that this was not a constructive interjection, with the former delegation responding that the money used on the media aggression could be put to good use by the Organization.

44. One delegation noted that it wished to include a paragraph in the resolution that would propose preventing the media from undermining democracy, fanning ethnic strife and contributing to manifestations of extremism. Another was concerned about hate media, and called on the Department to develop programmes to address its harmful effects on peace and security.

45. One delegation was especially concerned about the power of the media to distort information through selectivity or a partisan intent, pointed to the excessive preoccupation with armed conflicts in the past few years, and noted that there is a vaster reality of underdevelopment which may not be breaking news but has been soul-breaking news for countless generations.

46. Many speakers pointed to the call by the General Assembly to maintain and improve activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and those with special needs, including countries in transition. In the words of one delegation, if the Department does not focus on the development agenda in its work the Organization will be irrelevant to three billion poor of the world, representing half of the world's population. Many delegations called on the Department to publicize United Nations activities and accomplishments on sustainable human development issues, including poverty eradication, women's rights and empowerment, children's issues, the environment, health and education. A number of speakers praised the Department's large-scale promotional campaign for the Millennium Summit, with one suggesting that these efforts largely contributed to the success of that event. Several speakers also noted that the "The United Nations works" programme is publicizing United Nations activities, in particular activities related to economic and social development, around the world. Many delegations expressed support for a wide range of thematic campaigns being carried out by the Department, especially with regard to the publicizing of upcoming major international conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly. A number of delegations emphasized the importance that they attach to the success of the Third International Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the Department's intensive work on it. Several pointed to the Department's programmes to publicize the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, and the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Many spoke of the importance that they attach to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and strongly supported the Department's information campaign for the Conference.

47. A number of speakers pointed to the important work being done to promote the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001), and noted the Department's efforts to depict the United Nations, in the words of one speaker, as a forum in which fruitful dialogue can flourish. Several speakers called for the Department to disseminate information on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). Several speakers called for increased dissemination of information on the question of Palestine, and called for an enhanced role for the Committee in uncovering the facts

related to the suffering of the Palestinian people and the acts of aggression perpetrated against them. They also underscored the importance of the Department's training programme for Palestinian journalists. Similarly, a number of delegations were highly supportive of the Department's training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition, and asked that it be expanded. One speaker pointed to the need to publicize the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and called on the Department to redouble its efforts related to the self-determination of peoples. Several delegations thanked the Department for its work to publicize the fifteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, noting the related web page in particular. One delegation noted that it hoped that the problems of the Semipalatinsk region, which had been affected by nuclear tests, would, as usual, be reflected in the Committee's resolution. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, called on the Department to promote next year's twentieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Another expressed support for the Department's cooperation with the private sector in convening two experience-sharing workshops in communications for senior officials, held in New York and Turin.

48. All speakers agreed on the important role of public information in United Nations peacekeeping operations, especially in the troop-contributing countries. Many agreed that information activities to provide local populations with access to impartial information are essential. It was underscored by a number of speakers that cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, both at the planning and implementation stages, is essential. Several delegations noted that they attach great importance to the central role played by the Department of Public Information in the selection of spokespersons for United Nations missions. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a group, noted that radio programming in peacekeeping operations is an indispensable tool of communication, as for example in the case of Radio UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone.

49. Several speakers requested more information on the implications of the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General on resource requirements for the implementation of the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. In so doing, they questioned whether there is a risk that the Department's role in peace missions might be weakened. One delegation noted that it agrees with the recommendations in the Panel's report on enhancing planning and operational support for the public information for peacekeeping operations, and another called on the Department to assist in the implementation of these recommendations. One speaker could not support the attempt to continue reducing the already decreased structures of the Department of Public Information, based on recommendations contained in the Panel's report. Another delegation agreed, noting that strengthening the Peace and Security Section in the Department of Public Information would better equip it to meet the challenges of providing operational support to United Nations missions. In our view, the Department of Public Information is best placed to lend such expertise to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the speaker noted, and similarly, the Cartographic Unit and the Media Monitoring and Analysis Unit would best be left in the Department. Some delegations made it clear that the Committee on Information is the appropriate body to consider any recommendations of the Secretary-General on the Panel's report which might impact the Department of Public Information. On the subject of

peacekeeping, one speaker said that the United Nations must send observers to the occupied territories to investigate the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

50. A number of speakers expressed their appreciation for the information resources and the services available in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, pointed to the Department's strategic efforts to computerize the Library, which were welcomed. Other delegations agreed that the launching of the United Nations Bibliographic Information System on the web, the Library's premiere database on the Internet, were certain to facilitate access to documents. One speaker, also on behalf of a large group, said that his group supported the development of United Nations libraries in becoming modern, integrated libraries accessible to all audiences. Others pointed to the training courses organized by the Library, and encouraged their further development for the staff of permanent missions.

51. Many speakers emphasized that the United Nations information centres play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization and characterized them as "windows on the world". Their importance to the people of developing countries was underscored, and one delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, said that information centres should be given adequate resources to ensure that the needs of those who could benefit most from information would be met. One delegation was pleased to note that 40 per cent of all information centres were in Africa, where they could make an invaluable contribution, as was the case at the centre in New Delhi, his capital. In a related comment, one delegation asked that funding be ensured for information centres in Africa, as they contributed to development there, in partnership with the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system.

52. Many speakers noted that the integration process should be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the host country concerned. One delegation reiterated its concern for the existing difficulties in the integration process. Several Committee members asked for a status report on the integrated centres. At the same time, a number of speakers, including one who spoke for a large group, said that they fully supported the initiative of the Secretary-General to develop United Nations houses, which would be a practical means to heighten the visibility of the United Nations presence and enhance understanding of its activities, as well as a cost-savings measure. One delegation, in particular, noted that the Secretary-General had attended the official opening of the United Nations House in Tokyo, and stated also that his Government highly valued the work of the United Nations information centre in Tokyo as the core public information unit in this newly established United Nations House. He added that the building and land had been provided by his Government on a rent-free basis.

53. A number of delegations expressed concern about the equitable disbursement of resources to the information centres, in particular to those in developing countries, and felt that further efforts were needed to rationalize this process. They supported the appeal made by the Secretary-General to the host Governments of information centres to facilitate the work of these centres in their countries by the provision of rent-free or rent-subsidized office space.

54. In commending the excellent work achieved by the information centre in Lisbon, one delegation said that it played an important role in disseminating information to other Portuguese-speaking countries where the United Nations did

not have the same means to inform the public. Several speakers noted that communications technology has made a significant contribution to the efficiency and effectiveness of the information centres and called for all centres to be suitably equipped. One speaker noted that all information centres should have web sites, pointing to the necessity for the centre in Port-of-Spain to have one, as it served the entire Caribbean region. One delegation suggested that information centres could contribute to the development of gender-sensitive policies relating to information and communications technology in their host countries.

55. One delegation, speaking for a large group, said that her group looked forward to the enhanced information component in the multi-island office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kingston. One speaker expressed serious concern that the centre in his capital has not had a Director since the previous incumbent left Dhaka years ago. The centre had been de facto integrated with UNDP, and he wished to know when a Director would be posted there. Similarly, one Committee member was concerned at the elimination of the post of information officer at the United Nations Office in Minsk.

56. At the end of the general debate, the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information made a statement, responding to some of the questions raised by delegations.

Chapter IV
Consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General

57. Seven reports of the Secretary-General were introduced by the Interim Head of the Department and senior staff members, and were discussed individually by the Committee. The report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2001/2) were considered in the opening remarks of the Interim Head and later in the general debate, and therefore did not receive a separate review.

58. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on public information activities for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001) (A/AC.198/2001/3), the Department noted that it has undertaken a campaign which will help to foster a positive perception of diversity, as well as depict the United Nations as a forum in which dialogue in every field of human endeavour can flourish. The culmination of the activities for the Year will be on 3 and 4 December 2001, when the Year will be officially commemorated by the General Assembly. One delegation, on behalf of a group, noted that the General Assembly's call for dialogue has been well received around the world and will help to promote further respect for all civilizations. It was noted that a group of eminent persons selected by the Secretary-General is working with his Personal Representative for the Year on a book that will focus on diversity. One speaker questioned why only the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Cable News Network were cited in the report in connection with the broadcast of public service announcements. The Department replied that these organizations were the first to provide an affirmative answer. Subsequently, however, announcements have gone to approximately 100 television channels around the world.

59. The Department introduced the reports of the Secretary-General on the integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme, implementation of the views of host Governments (A/AC.198/2001/4), and on equitable disbursement of resources to United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2001/5). On the latter report, the Department noted that annual cash contributions by host Governments have had a very positive impact on the successful operation of many centres. It was noted in the annex to the report that in regard to the information centre in Bogotá, the Government has contributed more than was indicated, bringing the total to US$ 66,466. The Department made a clarification regarding the expenses of the information centre in Tokyo, which paid rent to the United Nations University (UNU). In fact, UNU had agreed to lower the rent by 30 per cent in 2001. The Department emphasized that the generosity of Member States that have made rent-free premises available or otherwise contributed to operating requirements has been recognized by the Secretary-General.

60. One speaker commented on the disparities in the allocation of posts to information centres. In some developing countries, the highest post level was a P-4, and this situation needed to be improved. Another delegation noted that it understood the financial limitations faced by the Department; however, it hoped that special efforts could be made to provide resources to the centres in developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The Department responded that it would continue to study the staffing of the information centres to find effective solutions to ensure the widest possible information outreach.

61. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica (A/AC.198/2001/6), the Department noted that the relationship between the Organization and the University is a long-standing one, dating to the 1970s. Many cooperative activities have been undertaken throughout the year, and steps are now being taken to enhance the University's facilities to broadcast the Organization's live radio programming.

62. Concerning the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations (A/AC.198/2001/7), the Department thanked all the Member States that cooperated with the Organization to make this ground-breaking new project possible, in all six official languages, and with a small Kiswahili and Portuguese component. This radio initiative by the Organization, in cooperation with radio broadcasting organizations around the world, has transformed the way the United Nations reaches out to peoples everywhere. The response has been overwhelming. As a consequence, the number of radio tapes being distributed has been reduced to date from 3,000 to 2,000 per week, with further reductions anticipated. This means that resources will be saved, which can then be invested in direct broadcasting. The Department noted that the project is only six months old and is therefore still evolving. However, United Nations daily programming is now being transmitted in about 100 countries. The Department will seek both to build more partnerships, in cooperation with Member States, and to enhance the content being made available.

63. A number of speakers expressed their strong support for the radio pilot project, and noted that they attach great importance to this form of United Nations outreach,

particularly in developing countries. One delegation noted that Latin America, in particular, is benefiting from this direct programming. As one Committee member noted, it provides a good example of the results that can be achieved when all sides pool their efforts.

64. The Department pointed out, however, that neither the mandate nor the resources exist to continue the project in the biennium 2002-2003. This is, therefore, a matter for further discussion, and the project's extension depends on the assessment by the General Assembly. The Department stated that the cost of the project is estimated at US$ 1.7 million per year, and while clearly another pilot project is not necessary, it would be advisable, if possible, to maintain the existing level of programming for the foreseeable future.

65. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on continued multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site (A/AC.198/2001/8), the Department said that since the report was prepared the site has been receiving four million accesses per day, with the average number of documents viewed amounting to 410,000. The Department underscored that there are two aspects to the issue of multilingual development of the United Nations web site. To ensure regular maintenance and enhancement of the site, a sound foundation in terms of staffing and resources is required. While some measures have already been taken, within existing resources, further development of the site will need additional allocations, and the Department still believes that a feasibility study should be undertaken. At the same time, the issue of content creation and development will need to be dealt with on a wider, organizational basis.

66. A number of speakers reiterated their praise for the Department's work on the United Nations web site. The issue of multilingualism was widely discussed, and Committee members were unanimous in their call for parity of all six official languages on the web site. They were of the view that the General Assembly's call for linguistic parity has not been heeded, and that therefore it is essential that action be taken to correct the imbalance. One delegation called on the Secretariat to submit a written breakdown of the precise number of staff working on each of the language web sites. Delegations also requested a further analysis of the web site accesses in terms of users' regions, languages, and chosen subjects. The Department responded that it is acquiring new software that will facilitate such analysis. It was also noted, however, that locations of users are sometimes difficult to establish because service providers are often located in different areas.

67. Several delegations noted their appreciation for the clarity and honesty of the Department's report. They acknowledged that parity on the web site is not a problem for the Department of Public Information to solve alone, as it can only be addressed in concert with all content-creating departments. Speakers mentioned a range of web site issues, such as the availability of the optical disk system, income-generation possibilities, a common portal for the system, the development and expansion of an index, and web site accessibility for people with disabilities. One delegation raised the matter of distributing materials on the web site before they are issued in hard copy, which is a clear violation of United Nations rules and must not be repeated.

68. The Interim Head of the Department stated that multilingualism is a cardinal principle for the Department, to the extent that resources allow. He asked for suggestions on potential cutbacks within the Department's work programme so that resources can be freed for further web site development. He also reminded the

Committee that the Department of Public Information has lost 103 posts since the 1992/1993 biennium. He noted that Member States have previously been presented with a figure in excess of US$ 600 million as the amount required for achieving full parity of the six official languages on the web site, a figure that was not accepted. One delegation noted that the door has now been opened for proposals from the Committee; since the budget has not yet been adopted for the next biennium, it is premature to accept that no resources will be available for the web site, and further discussions must take place.

69. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) in 2000 (A/AC.198/2001/9), the Department recalled that JUNIC, at its last session, endorsed the "The United Nations works" promotional programme as a system-wide initiative to be coordinated by the Department. Furthermore, JUNIC members expressed strong interest in working together to use new information technology to communicate the United Nations message to audiences around the world. The Department noted that there is support for system-wide cooperation in the field of television, the United Nations News Service on the Internet and on the international radio broadcasting capacity.